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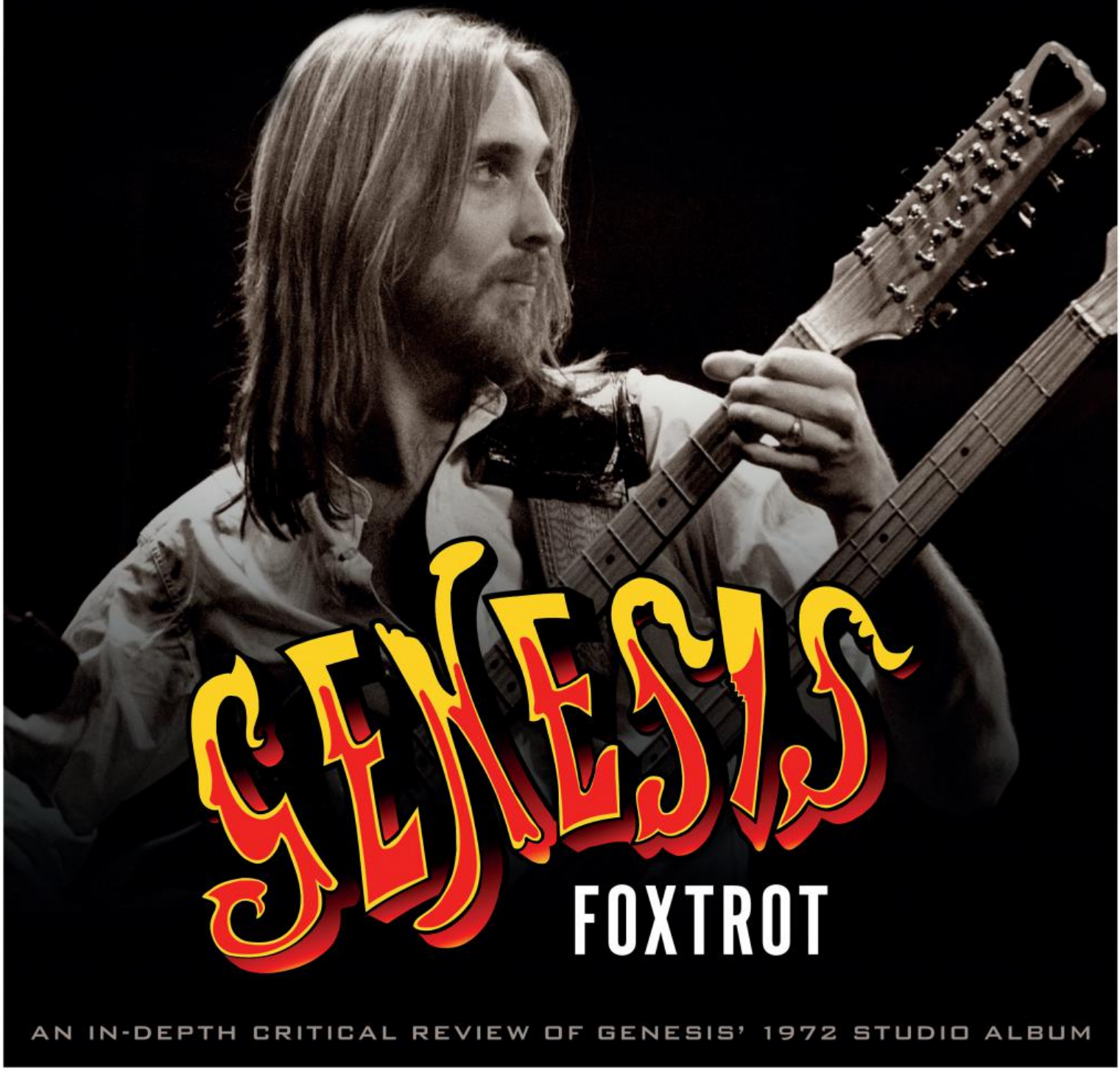
SPECIAL EDITION

WITH A TRACK-BY-TRACK REVIEW OF THE ALBUM

MUSIC LEGENDS

THE ROCK ICONS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

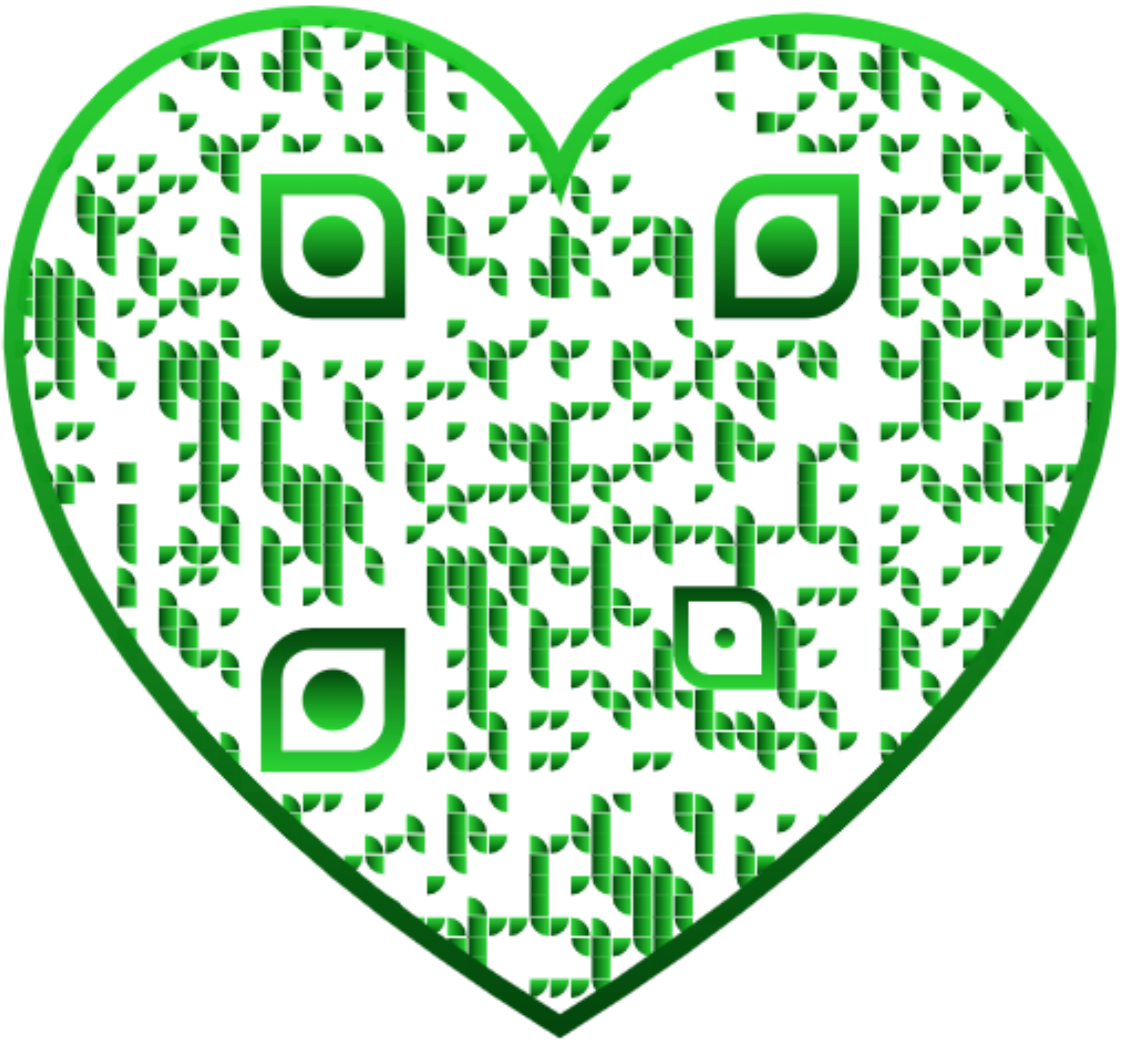
THE INSIDE STORY OF ROCK'S GREATEST NAMES



GENESIS

FOXTROT

AN IN-DEPTH CRITICAL REVIEW OF GENESIS' 1972 STUDIO ALBUM



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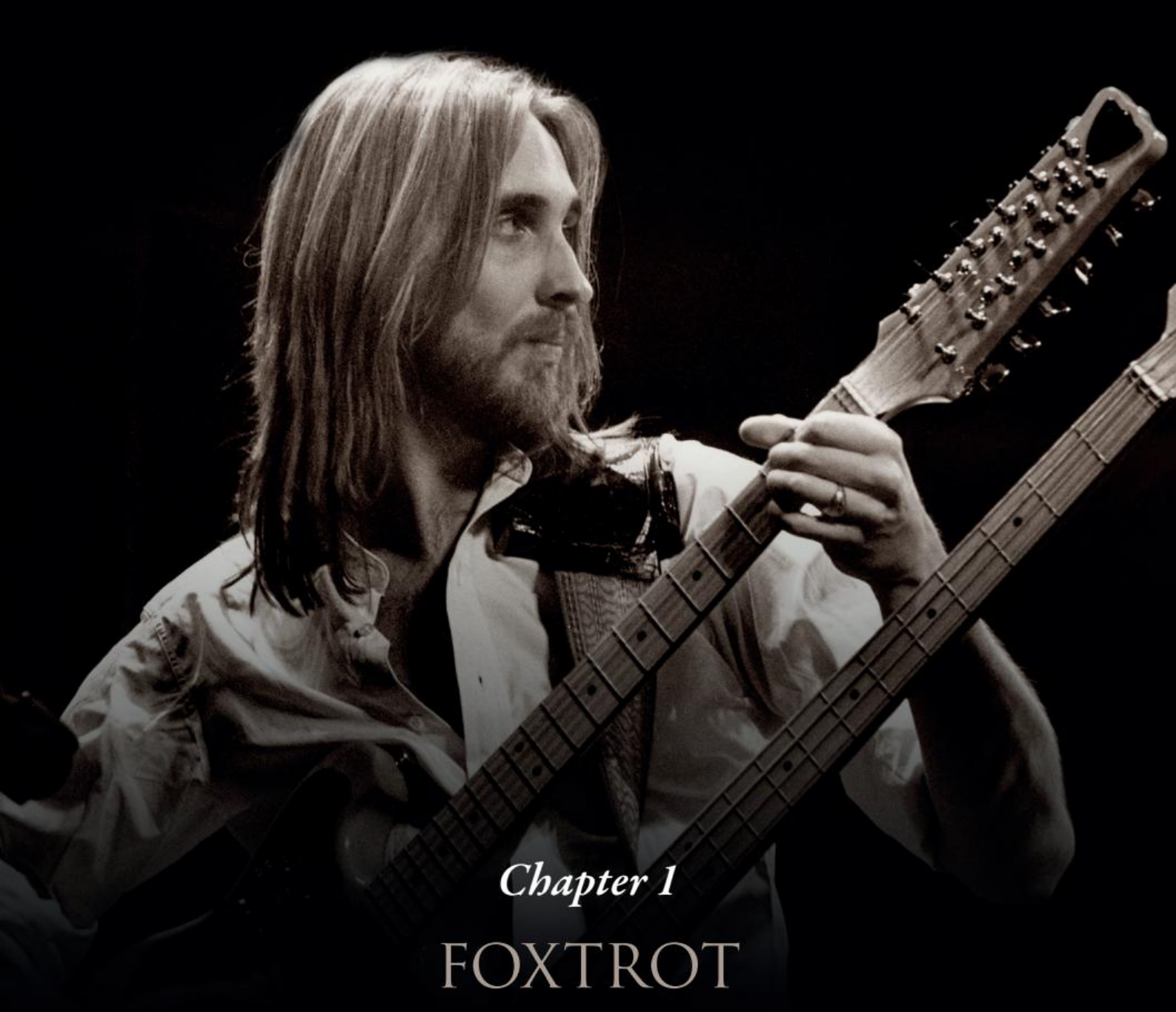


Chapter 1

FOXTROT

By the beginning of 1972 Genesis could have been forgiven for thinking that they would never achieve success with their unique brand of progressive rock. Despite all of their best creative efforts *Nursery Cryme* seemed to have been received less warmly in the market than *Trespass*, at least in the UK. Faced with a sales graph that remained resolutely flat the band stepped up their efforts on the live front and in an effort to gain recognition were playing up to five nights a week in small venues up and down the UK.

A measure of salvation came in the form of some news which arrived at last from Charisma. Genesis were delighted to be informed

of keen European interest in the group and rising record sales with high chart positions for both albums in Belgium and Italy. This new interest served to bolster the band's enthusiasm in the face of mounting debt and general indifference in the UK, where the group appeared to count for little outside of the 6,000 regular supporters who had avidly bought up *Trespass* and *Nursery Cryme*.

It is something of a cliché to describe albums as being 'make or break' but there was certainly an element of that in relation to the band's 'third' album *Foxtrot*.

Although it hadn't sold particularly well, in creative terms *Nursery Cryme* had set the bar pretty high, and it was obvious that it would take something pretty special to push the band to the next level. Fortunately Genesis had a huge ace up their sleeve in the shape of *Supper's Ready*, an anthem, not just for the expanding army of Genesis fans, but for progressive rock fans everywhere. This piece more than any other would revolutionise the fortunes of the band and make *Foxtrot* an all time classic.

A track-by-track review of

FOXTROT

by Hugh Fielder

Every band's catalogue generates the inevitable arguments over which album is best or most definitive. Leaving aside the post-Gabriel period for a moment, there are usually three Genesis contenders for this accolade: *Foxtrot*, *Selling England by the Pound* and *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*. That there are three is testament to the strength of the catalogue, but there is certainly an argument for *Foxtrot* being the one album where all of Genesis' stars aligned for the first time to create a truly classic and original album.

Watcher of the Skies

Opening with a sweeping Mellotron string overture from Tony Banks, *Watcher of the Skies* proceeds to offer immediate evidence of a new confidence and maturity. Hackett's and Collins' talents have been fully integrated to create the full-fledged Genesis sound. Based upon a staccato rhythm part, the song muses on an earth from which mankind has departed to fulfil the next part of its destiny. The song has somewhat simpler construction and arrangement than many Genesis songs from the era and is probably more accessible to newcomers, hence the edited version released as a single.

Time Table

By Genesis standards at least, *Time Table* is another relatively straightforward song, almost ballad-like with lyrics that evoke images of a long ago golden age of knights and chivalry while musing on the way in which the people of each age consider themselves superior to previous civilisations. Musically the track offers contrast to *Watcher* and *Friday* by largely eschewing wide-screen organ and Mellotron in favour of piano, bass, drums and twelve-string guitar.

Get 'Em Out by Friday

On the face of things this is one of those light-hearted narrative songs which crops up regularly in the early Genesis canon. This time, however, there is a serious sting in the tale. From the first notes this is a musically complex concoction comprising many contrasting musical elements and characterised by Rutherford's rhythmic, almost lead bass work. Gabriel acts out the different characters of this mini-opera with the heavier music providing the backdrop for the dastardly landlord types forcing the long-term tenants out of their homes and the softer passages providing a poignant backing for the plaintive strains of the confused and harassed tenants.

Can Utility and the Coastliners

Can Utility opens with a return to the pastoral tones of twelve-string guitars and lyrics that deal somewhat obscurely with the legend of King Canute. Although the song opens in lightweight fashion it develops through a dramatic bass pedal powered mid-section to a hectic finale and manages to include many of the band's hallmark sounds along the way: those twelve-string guitars, Banks' keyboard arpeggios, Hackett's smooth fuzzed lead work, Rutherford's precise powerful bass playing, expressive vocals and some of the best drumming to be found in rock music. There probably isn't a track that better summarises in less than six minutes what Gabriel-era Genesis was all about, although *Can Utility* wouldn't sound out of place on later albums such as *Trick of the Tail* or *Wind and Wuthering*.

Horizons

A short acoustic guitar piece from Steve Hackett providing a few moments of tranquillity prior to the epic weight of what is to follow.

Supper's Ready

The cornerstone of *Foxtrot*, and for many fans the entire Gabriel-era, is *Supper's Ready*, for all intents and purposes the whole second side of the original vinyl album and clocking in at almost twenty-three minutes. In rock music if any single track deserves the title 'epic' it's this one: in terms of musical scope, ambition, atmosphere and execution *Supper's Ready* just possibly remains unsurpassed.

Lyrically Gabriel deploys all of his considerable talents and draws upon a strange supernatural experience he had shared with his wife to create an epic, William Blake-like wordscape on the subject of the fight between good and evil. It's worth noting that, for many fans, the lyrics of this track have a resonance that goes beyond the simple words involved – poetry indeed.

On the album sleeve *Supper's Ready* is divided into seven distinct parts:

Lovers' Leap

A chorus of gentle twelve-string guitars (even Tony Banks played guitar on this piece live) underpinned by church-like bass notes, with Gabriel's lyrics dealing directly, for the only time in the complete piece, with the experience that inspired him.

Guaranteed Eternal Sanctuary Man

Gentle wordless vocals along with electric piano, flute and guitar swells herald the transition to *Sanctuary Man* which begins with some farmer/fireman wordplay from Gabriel before the band goes electric, elevated by Rutherford's sustained bass pedal notes. At this point the lyrics take a darker turn as Gabriel reveals that we have all been fooled by the title. The section ends with a chorus of children singing, that serves to punctuate the different parts of the whole in a way that occurs several more times over the course of the piece.

Ikhaton and Itsacon and Their Band of Merry Men

A brief return to pastoral twelve-string guitars and flute introduces the *Ikhnaton* section with its 'host of dark skinned warriors' being released for battle. Said battle is sonically enacted as Collins lays down a heavy, slurred beat; once again the bass comes from pedals, while Rutherford strums electric twelve-string, Hackett plays one of his carefully structured solos and Banks decorates the whole with Bach-like arpeggios and flourishes.

How Dare I Be So Beautiful

Ikhnaton eases with the end of battle and the celebration of victory. Events now take a sinister turn as Gabriel's mournful tones describe the resulting carnage over brooding chord swells. The mythical figure of Narcissus is introduced before the piece is once again punctuated, this time by Gabriel's' comic voice asking 'a flower?'

Willow Farm

At this point the proceedings take a decidedly more eccentric turn with some abstract wordplay over a stomping rhythm and droning keyboard chords. Lyrically this part seems initially to have little to do with the overall piece and it is itself punctuated by a railwaymen's whistle and shout of 'all change' (Collins this time) before continuing at a faster pace with *Harold the Barrel*-style piano accompaniment before the original rhythm returns.

Possibly the lunacy of the lyrics allude Dr Strangelove-style to the madness of the Cold War; certainly the concluding 'end with a whistle, end with a bang' line would support this argument.

Apocalypse In 9/8 (Co-Starring the Delicious Talents of Gabble Ratchet)

With the first fourteen minutes of the track having passed in what seems to be only a fraction of that time, a short passage of dark keyboard chords, sustained bass-pedal notes and Hackett's guitar swells returns the listener for a brief few moments to the pastoral sound of acoustic guitars while Gabriel's flute picks out a beautiful haunting melody. The respite however is only brief before military snare drum rolls and a keyboard fanfare herald *Apocalypse in 9/8*, a dark powerful piece, often imitated but never matched in its intensity and originality, containing superlative drumming from Collins. Gabriel sings of Magog, the pied piper and dragons before Banks launches into his keyboard solo, a masterful composition in its own right which builds and builds the musical tension and intensity until Gabriel launches into the '666 is no longer alone' section.

If there is any one point in the Genesis canon that demonstrates just why they are so revered it is this. The attentive listener is simultaneously shocked by Gabriel's nightmare lyrical vision and elevated by the power and dynamics of the music.

From Goons-like lunacy to the end of the world in a few short minutes; heavy metal is just kids' stuff by comparison.

After the awe and horror the music takes a more human turn, reprising the closing lines from *Lovers' Leap* speaking of love and assuring that everything is 'going to work out fine'.

As Sure As Eggs Is Eggs (Aching Men's Feet)

Although the 9/8 rhythm has passed, the music loses none of its power as it moves into one of those majestic, mid-paced Genesis rhythm parts underpinned by deep bass-pedal notes that would long remain a trademark of their sound. The lyrics take a positive, spiritual turn as the listener is taken home to New Jerusalem, putting musical flesh on the words and imagery of William Blake. Hackett overlays guitar swells while Banks creates a pseudo-orchestral wall of sound and Gabriel sings his lyrics with a passion unprecedented in the Genesis catalogue. The track slowly fades as if ascending to heaven, leaving the listener to wonder at the music and emotion they have just experienced.

◊

While for many Genesis fans *Foxtrot* is their clear favourite among the albums, it certainly didn't work that way with the press. As we have seen *Music Scene* got squarely behind the lack lustre *From Genesis to Revelation* and really began to pick up on the outstanding qualities of *Trespass* and *Nursery Cryme*. One would have expected their coverage to continue in the same enthusiastic terms with the arrival of the superb *Foxtrot*. But, as generations of artists have discovered, you can never second guess the press and despite the enthusiasm for its markedly similar predecessor it was an unexpected hatchet job for *Foxtrot*:

'In any event *Nursery Cryme* has become representative of Genesis' music mainly because *Foxtrot* arrived shortly afterwards and was in

the same musical vein. Unfortunately *Foxtrot* was subject to time hassles and there is little evidence of thought in the musicianship. Phil Collins constantly employs a heavy, limiting beat which threatens the rest of the group rather than punctuates or prompts it. Steve Hackett's guitar is listless and Peter Gabriel sounds schizophrenic, as if trying to impose hastiness on the vocals whether apt or not. Altogether not a happy album, but it was a time when Genesis felt compelled to push product out for economic reasons.

Nevertheless, lyrically it is more directly allusive to humour a la Python though they take their anti-establishmentism much more seriously one feels. There is the futuristic announcement from Genetic Control: "It is my sad duty to inform you of a four-foot restriction on humanoid height." In *Get 'Em Out by Friday* they tell the story of a big bad landlord, while in *Supper's Ready* Gabriel employs banal lyrics using an associationist technique to impel interest.

"There's Winston Churchill dressed in drag/he used to be a British flag plastic bag/What a drag/the frog was a prince. the prince was a brick. the brick was an/egg and the egg was a bird hadn't you heard/ Yes we're as happy as fish, as gorgeous as geese/and wonderfully clean in the morning"

Or there's: "All Change/Feel your body melt Mum to mud mad to dad Dad diddley office, Dad diddley office/You're full of ball/Dad to dam to dum to mum/Mum diddley washing. mum diddley washing/ You're all full of ball/Let me hear your lies we're living this up to the eyes/Oooe Ooee Ooee Ooee/Momma I want you now"

Get it? I'm not sure I do. But my suggestion is that it is simply watching the establishment, growing up with it and then seeing how it can be manipulated. Either by other people or by maturity, or by using weapons of your own principles to strengthen your own lifestyle; anyway think of your own interpretation, then put on an old Cream LP have a stiff drink and forget it.

Visually Genesis are front runners in today's harum-scarum of mock sex and mock violence. Gabriel's bald patch and his outlandish

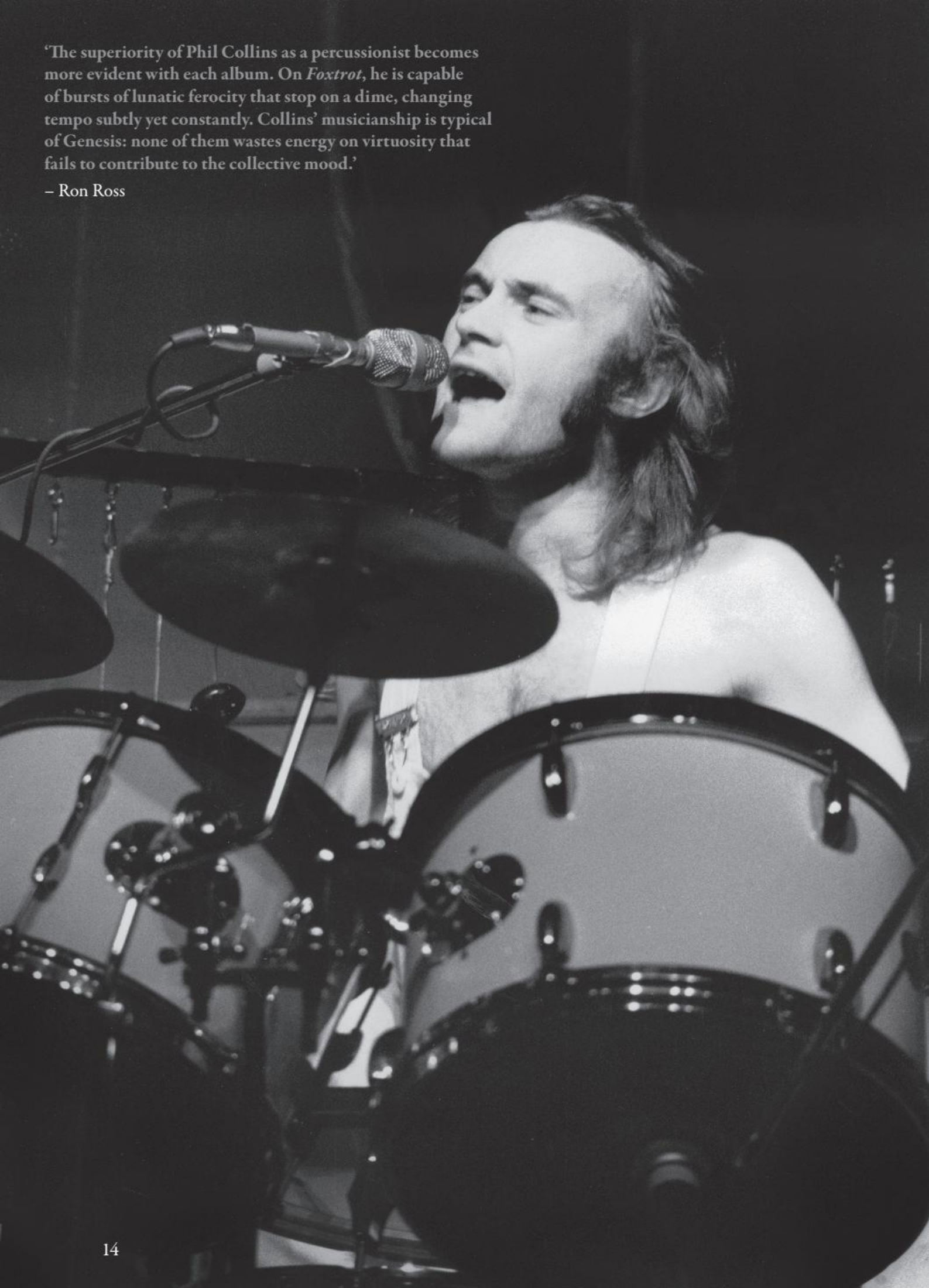
headdress are part and parcel with their determination to alert the audience to their reality by every means possible.

The result is evil drama, infiltrated by that insistent running instrumental effect from Tony Banks and Steve Hackett as they sit studiously over their instruments and support Peter Gabriel's slightly jeering delivery. It can make you feel naked sitting powerlessly in the auditorium. For Gabriel both incites and stills the audience. In Aylesbury once he encouraged the audience to boo. "It gave them something to do which was not just a considered, automatic and politely preconceived response," he said "It backfired slightly when we got a section of boo boys following us about. Full of good intentions but somewhat disconcerting!"

In America where they did their first gig around Christmas 1972 (at a cost of $16,000) as part of a charity booking with String Driven Thing, life has not been so easy. They were described then as "hazy but lovable: comic jive" and it was true that the Americans enjoyed the show – then.'

Fortunately there were other writers who were prepared to champion the new album. Among them was Ron Ross who seemed to have a unique ability to get beneath the skin of what Genesis were attempting to do; and in consequence was able to gain a large measure of access to the band at a time when their fame was at its height. This was obviously a wise move on the part of the band as Ron's work has always been perceptive, and while remaining objective, is generally sympathetic to what the band were trying to achieve:

'Genesis' next album, *Foxtrot*, was universally acclaimed by the British critics and became the band's first substantial best-seller over there. Side one opened with *Watcher of the Skies*, a cosmically philosophical song in which Gabriel seemed to take on the persona of God Himself. Combining morality with melodrama, the number



'The superiority of Phil Collins as a percussionist becomes more evident with each album. On *Foxtrot*, he is capable of bursts of lunatic ferocity that stop on a dime, changing tempo subtly yet constantly. Collins' musicianship is typical of Genesis: none of them wastes energy on virtuosity that fails to contribute to the collective mood.'

– Ron Ross

benefits from the sure interplay between Banks' multiple keyboards and Hackett's screaming guitar. The superiority of Phil Collins as a percussionist becomes more evident with each album. On *Foxtrot*, he is capable of bursts of lunatic ferocity that stop on a dime, changing tempo subtly yet constantly. Collins' musicianship is typical of Genesis: none of them wastes energy on virtuosity that fails to contribute to the collective mood. "The most important thing to us is the song," Tony Banks insists, "then the playing and only then the presentation. We're not concerned with flaunting musicianship. Yes and ELP are more dependent on solos. I'm not a soloist as such. I think of myself more as an accompanist who colours the sound."

Foxtrot's *Get 'Em Out by Friday* is one of Gabriel's finest moments. Set at least as far in the future as *The Musical Box* was in the past, *Get 'Em Out by Friday* is the story of Styx Enterprises' fiendishly efficient plot to restrict "humanoid height" to four-feet in order to create more flats in the same space. Gabriel impersonates any number of low or humble types, from the villainous Winkler to Mrs. Barrow, the victim. In all, *Get 'Em Out by Friday* is as fine a mini-opera as any ever written by The Who.

Supper's Ready takes up almost all of side two of *Foxtrot*. Although it requires several concentrated listenings to follow the "plot", *Supper's Ready* reigns as perhaps Genesis' most popular and highly regarded work. Its thematic preoccupations are noble: love, hate, religion, war, illusion, reality and apocalypse are all covered by a multitude of symbolic representations. *Supper's Ready* is both "symphonic" and "classical" without sounding at all like symphonic classical music. Onstage, Gabriel pulled out all stops on *Supper's Ready*, creating in the process his best known role, the flower-man of the *Willow Farm* segment, and his most breath taking stunt, his flight through the air at the finale.'

Richard Cromelin was a journalist who was in early on the Genesis story. He had previously written on the band for *Rolling Stone*

reviewing *Nursery Cryme* as early as 1971. In England, Richard was also championing the band in the English press and as the release of *Foxtrot* approached, Richard enjoyed an extensive interview with Peter Gabriel and Phil Collins which the singer and drummer gave with a view to publicising the new album. The piece is well worth revisiting as it has much to say not just about the then current state of affairs within the band itself but also about the prevailing attitude to music in the UK in late 1972. Steeped in the atmosphere of 1972 this invaluable first hand account effortlessly evokes the forgotten mores and manners of many years ago:

'"Cor, saw this ace band the other night," said a friend of mine during that sunny day that was the summer of 1971. "I've never seen anything quite like them." The friend, known by many as Harry Laughing Trousers, went on to describe the band, who turned out to be Genesis. I muttered something about never having the pleasure to have heard them and strolled off to the local for a few pints. A few weeks later Genesis were in town so I thought I'd stroll along and find out what they were all about. It was a strange evening. It was a small gig and Genesis were regarded as a small time band, but their music was something else.

Every song was a masterpiece. I lovingly nurtured a high respect for the group as months rolled by and I lost track of them for a while. Were they dead, had they left the country? I had expected them to have become ginormous by this summer, but alas they were still doing those nerve-wracking little gigs and were still being treated as a small time band. Then came Reading. Genesis stole the show on the Friday and they were beginning to emerge. Their bread and butter is still the club and college circuit and although they don't draw huge crowds every person that goes to see them knows what to expect and loves every minute.

The new Genesis album, *Foxtrot*, is their fourth album, although their first LP, on Decca, is rarely talked about by the band or their followers. Since they joined Charisma Genesis have boldly tried to

progress in their own field and have always gone where others may have feared to tread. "This album will make or break us," said Phil "but we say that whenever we bring out a new album. We always think the public will hate it and push us into oblivion." The first side of the new album is like four songs that have been arranged, but the second side really is a natural progression from what we were doing on *Nursery Cryme*.

Drummer Phil Collins and singer/flautist Peter Gabriel are probably the two men in the band whose personalities come over strongest onstage and Gabriel is one of the strangest showmen on the scene right now. While others have their hair done green, silver and other assorted colours, Peter has cut a wedge of hair from the front of his scalp.

"There are various reasons for having done this," said Peter in his usual wry way. "The first is that it was done so that one can see the lights, jumping from one side to another. Secondly it is a symbol of the desert that lies within, and finally it could also be translated by the fact that my razor slipped." Who's a cheeky boy, then? You can decide for yourself which version is true, if any, are but the little tale gives one an insight into the serious yet humorous way Genesis look at life. But is Peter just jumping on the glam rock bandwagon, after all you've got to be pretty strange to get attention these days. "I've been tarting myself up for years since we first started in fact. It's all part of creating a fantasy for the audience to enjoy."

What makes Genesis different from most bands who are looking for their place alongside the big guns in the business is their presentation, which is as entertaining as their music. In between numbers Gabriel enhances the fantasy by taking the audience on an excursion through a make believe world where people tend to get smashed to pieces in violent croquet matches.

One of my favourite Genesis horror tales tells of a lady dressed in a trouser-suit who boards a tube train in London. Looking around at the blank faces in the carriage she decides to liven things up a bit

and reaches to the top of her head where she finds a zip which runs around her body, cranium to crotch, and peels off her skin, her flesh falling to the floor of the carriage with a "plop". "A few months ago I decided to cut my stories down a bit," said Peter. "We were playing a lot on the Continent and the audiences just couldn't understand what I was going on about. They just fell flat. I am going to work on my stories again, though, because the European thing meant that I neglected them a little. I started telling them just to fill in between numbers so that the rest of the band can swap instruments and get ready for the next song.

"In the studio there is always the temptation to put a lot of extra instruments and sounds into the songs which we couldn't possibly hope to recreate onstage, but nevertheless we still take a lot of time getting an album together. *Nursery Cryme* took over ten weeks to get together. We'd never do a live album because of this. There would be too much going on to make a good live recording."

Like many of today's musicians Peter admires the work of David Bowie who he thinks is one of the best lyricists around. "Bolan?" asked Peter, "He's blown it." One can usually get close to what makes a band tick by finding out what their musical tastes are and it may not shock you to know that *In the Court of the Crimson King*, the first King Crimson album, was one of the strongest influences on Genesis in the early days alongside some of Procol Harum's work, but both Phil and Peter are pop freaks on the quiet. "There are plans for Phil and I to get some of our friends into a studio to cut a few pop-type singles," said Peter. "But I don't think we'd release them under our names." What about those stories, would they be going on record. "Oh, no," said Peter. "The spoken word gets boring very quickly and people would get sick of them after a few plays."

Theirs was an intriguing dilemma. The group wholeheartedly believed in the music yet realised extra initiative was needed to reach massive audiences. In a last ditch attempt for recognition, Gabriel

began to develop into a first class front man, gifted with the ability to pull the audience into their world while the band added to the dramatics. The fantasy was beginning to make sense. And *Foxtrot* was the right vehicle for working out animated expectations.

"The first time people see us they think of us only as a visual act. But to us," Gabriel says passionately, "it's all music. The visuals only succeed if the music is satisfying as well. It's a means to an end with us. The only reason you're there is to communicate and you're better able to do that with movement," he points out rationally. "Still I'd like to think of myself more as a writer than a performer. That's what I derive more satisfaction from."

From the start, the band stressed the primary importance of the music, always taking elaborate pains to explain that the visuals, while entertaining, are just a necessary ploy to make the music more accessible.

Still the group was always aware of the danger of falling prey to cute theatrics or coy dramatic effects. Avoiding over-indulgent aspirations, Genesis strived to satisfy both audiences and themselves, reaching out towards a visual/musical synthesis. Slowly they began to succeed. *Foxtrot* begged for experimentation.

"We'd never dismiss a piece of music if we thought it inadequate for visual presentation," Tony Banks had said in a reflective moment. "Visuals come after the music. Visuals are only considered once the piece is finished."

"You hate to think of the overall concept of Genesis being visuals," Steve Hackett rightfully admitted. "I don't want people thinking they're going to see some glitter band."

Understandable sentiments from the musical camp. Still early stage shows were reaching for something that wasn't quite ripe. The first attempt at staging *Foxtrot* elicited lots of oohs and ahs while still managing to give die-hard cynics breathing space. There was Peter Gabriel decked out in similar gear as the fox/woman cover illustration, bearing little relationship to thematic content

but looking good. It was the autumn of 1972 and Genesis found themselves guesting on a goodbye Lindisfarne tour.

By February of the following year, Genesis were evolving rapidly, poised on the brink of becoming very big indeed. With their first prestigious London Rainbow show, everything came together. Worldwide success seemed inevitable. And all because of a twenty-minute futuristic opus entitled *Supper's Ready*.

"Old Michael walked past the pet shop which was never open into the park which was never closed," Gabriel sombrely addressed the intrigued gathering. "The park was full of very smooth, very clean grass. Michael took off all his clothes and began rubbing his pink, flabby flesh into the wet, clean grass. Beneath the ground the dirty brown worms interpreted the pitter-patter as rainfall. In worm world rainfall meant two things: bath time because worms like to keep clean and mating time because worms like to keep dirty. Within seconds the park was covered with dirty, soggy, writhing brown worms. Old Michael was quite pleased humming a little tune. Jerusalem boogie to us perhaps but to the worms it meant that supper was ready."

Nonsensical gibberish perhaps, delivered in droll tones, but it sure beat the hell out of saying "and for our next number..." Genesis began to explode at alarming rates. *Supper's Ready* was a monumental tour de force. The band played on with renewed expertise and spirit while Gabriel sprang to life, parading around the stage in a myriad of costumes, which unlike the previous foxhead strut, fit perfectly with the lyrics.

"When we first started doing *Supper's Ready* onstage it didn't go down very well, until Peter started wearing a few costumes to demonstrate the characters," Tony remembers. "Suddenly it became the strong point of the act. We'd been doing the same thing for three years and suddenly with the visuals we started getting attention. We were very surprised how easy it was to get the front page of *Melody Maker* just by wearing a flower on your head," Phil says slightly stunned. "We didn't even see Peter's costume till the night of the gig."

In a democratically run five-man band, one could rightfully wonder how the band agree on stage presentation, assuming that Gabriel could hardly turn up one afternoon decked out in his flower regalia, ready to do *Willow Farm*. "Well actually," Peter says, a nice snicker all over his bemused face, "that's what happened. I very much wanted to get a character across. I knew if I put it to the group vote it would get turned down. So I sneaked into rehearsal one day with this big package with all the masks. The band just looked on in astonishment."

Still the band is adamant about becoming too elaborate. The music is first on everyone's priority list. "We don't want Genesis to go over the top," Gabriel said very much aware of the precarious situation. "We still consider ourselves as writers who only play at being musicians and then play at being presenters." Which ultimately is where group strength lies. With Genesis there is no one man band, no technical whiz kid. Like all great groups, their strength lies in numbers. Individually they are not virtuoso instrumentalists but together they are unbeatable. Feel is not reproducible, and with Genesis the feel is more than abundant.

"We're trying to stress a group thing and it is difficult. Much of the publicity rests on Peter but we want to be known as a five man band rather than a backing group for a singer," Tony stresses. "People get bored and they need something new to impress them. I hope we can sustain interest in the band. That's the hardest part. There are places when the show turns into a slightly different thing with just the band playing. It's nice that the attention is on you even if it's more conventional."

Their albums take months to make, pieced together in jig-saw fashion, each member contributing various segments and sections. Only thirty percent of the material makes vinyl, such are the rigours of their weeding out process. Blessed with an inbuilt ability to criticise each other, the finished product is representative of five minds, stronger because of it. "We're a very equally spread band," Phil

Collins points out making sure that one-man band misconceptions are rightfully destroyed. "It brings us down that people can't see beyond the superficial thing of Peter wearing funny masks. It's all related to the music. People seem to forget that all of us write music and lyrics. What annoys us intensely is when people come backstage after a gig, ignore everybody else, go up to Peter and say 'Amazing show man – really dug your music.'"

"Sometimes your ego's had a real down and they're all talking about Peter Gabriel and not the band," Rutherford continues expressing similar sentiments. "Well that's alright as long as it doesn't come into the writing. There's a feeling among the band that one has to prove themselves and in writing you tend to do what's best for the band. The thing that bothers the band most is when people assume Peter writes all the numbers. I'm not so proud as a player but as a writer I don't take criticism well," he grins.

Yet there's no denying Gabriel's omnipotent talent. He is unique, alone among more flamboyant contemporaries. His onstage evolution is just as curious as the band's musical dexterity that continues to become increasingly flexible.

Gabriel is a curious performer. While expressing verbal distaste for the whole proceeding off-stage, he carries himself like a born natural onstage, acting out character traits and fantasies with such ease you'd swear they were his own. Blessed with the ability to retreat into his own world, Gabriel will often look directly at you in conversation yet never hear a word you are saying. Yet his onstage début was less than auspicious, as an r'n'b drummer.

"I enjoyed drumming. There was quite a lot of physical action as well as expressing music. I didn't like being close-up, getting attention. When I began to write songs, I wanted to sing them. Most writers have an idea of how they want something to sound. Still it took me quite a while to enjoy the formal aspect of it. I enjoy performing more now but I consider it a bit like training an animal," he says softly, "except the animal is me."

'The first time people see us they think of us only as a visual act. But to us, it's all music. The visuals only succeed if the music is satisfying as well. It's a means to an end with us.'

– Peter Gabriel

Like the rest of the group, Gabriel keeps a proper perspective on himself. He does not play the temperamental prima donna, lacking a phoney show-biz veneer. He is flamboyant only onstage, always tempered with a good deal of humanity. "I don't feel comfortable with a large group of people. The first few times I was onstage I felt embarrassed. Once or twice in the old days I'd come out of myself at a party, do a sort of flash, arrogant routine, lots of dancing," he smiles snidely. "I enjoyed that and perhaps I now have an outlet for that onstage"

Despite the fact that compositions are group written Gabriel does contribute healthy doses of eccentric oddity coupled with offbeat humour. Lines like "Me I'm just a lawnmower/you can tell by the way I walk" work for him only. In a world of entertainment where mediocrity thrives, idols created to destroy, Peter Gabriel is an enigma. "I spent quite a lot of time as a child in my own world dreaming. Perhaps the distinction between what is real and what is not is less clear to me than others. I had a continuing battle between what I believe and my education. I was always taught to control emotions," he stops to collect his thoughts as one flashes on his therapeutic onstage outlet. "I had to find a way out somehow. When I was in a situation I didn't like, which was quite frequently, rather than rebel outwardly I would withdraw."

As can be seen in the enthusiasm which runs right through the piece you have just read, in 1972 journalists like Richard Cromelin were really beginning to swing in behind Genesis. The quality of the group's recorded output and the uniqueness of their live show produced an irresistible combination which swept the press along with every bit of the enthusiasm exhibited by the growing army of fans. The sales graph too had at last taken a turn upwards and the album finally brought Genesis to the UK album charts by rising to a highly respectable No. 12 position, the group's first chart entry in their native country. The momentum behind the band was at last

beginning to gather pace and over at *Beat Instrumental* the much respected Steve Turner was a journalist who had been well and truly switched on to Genesis and believed that *Foxtrot* was going to be huge. So convinced was Steve that he proclaimed the record album of the month and headed his December 1972 review of *Foxtrot* for *Beat Instrumental* magazine 'Genesis: A Hit LP in the Making':

'Some people are too embarrassed to ask Peter Gabriel about his spot of artificial "premature" baldness. He's seriously thinking of making a public statement saying that it was for deep personal religious feelings that he committed the act and then maybe people would become more understanding. Meanwhile customs officials regard him with a degree of suspicion and Hare Krishna devotees pat him on the back and tell him he's already half way to becoming a disciple.

The wisest wisecrack so far came when an old man solved it all by suggesting that Gabriel had shaved the patch in order to swat the lice as they ran from one side of his head to the other. The simple truth of the matter is that he just got fed up with the way he looked and decided to go in for a bit of spontaneous redecoration.

Although like Rod Stewart's cockatoo, David Bowie's brush-cut and the Beatles' fringes, the head-dress has drawn added attention to the band, it's most definitely for the music that Genesis exists. There are theatrics involved in their stage act its true, but it's all disciplined by the music. "The theatrics are used in order to enhance the music rather than the other way around" said bass player, Mike Rutherford, in what was perhaps an unconscious reference to David Bowie who has admitted publicly that he's no musician.

It's been the music on its own merit that has recently created the biggest stir for Genesis. The particular piece of music was an album called *Foxtrot* which received unanimous praise from the press and simultaneously shot into the album charts. The third release from the band, it outsold *Trespass* and *Nursery Cryme* within its first two weeks. The analysis of its success is not calculable in terms of

advertising, promotion, window displays or hype but purely on its own artistic merit.

Genesis themselves were aware that something special was being created during the recording of the second side of the album. "As *Supper's Ready* came out," said Gabriel, "we felt that it was something we were going to be proud of. We worked very hard on it. It really was a strain and took a lot out of us. I know for myself that I've never been so involved." Rutherford shares this belief that the album's potential was realised during the actual recording. "We were a lot happier than we'd ever been before. It worked when we were in the studio. Any sound we were able to produce we were able to get down accurately on tape. It was really down to the people we were working with – producer Dave Hitchcock and John Burns the engineer. They both knew what we were into. It was a joint effort instead of an uphill struggle because they knew exactly what we wanted."

One other person to spot that something special was happening with Genesis down at Island Studios was Charisma boss Tony Stratton-Smith, who also manages the band. "Strat came down to see us one day and he said 'you've done it'," recalled Gabriel. "He's always been convinced that we'd had something that we'd never got out on record before."

Genesis regard themselves as a co-operative band and all song-writing credits go down to the band as a whole rather than the individual members who may have initiated the idea. "That goes back to our idealistic days," laughed Gabriel when I asked him about the credits. "We still feel Genesis is an equal project though. It's a co-operative sharing of both good and bad. We originally did it to avoid individuals possibly pushing for their tracks to be on the album for royalty reasons alone."

When Gabriel read *Beat Instrumental*'s review of *Foxtrot* as Album of the Month he commented that the comparison with Family hadn't been made for some time although it was true that the band were especially struck on *Music in a Dolls House*. "The bands we're

consciously influenced by are the Beatles, King Crimson (Mk. I) and Procol Harum." I wondered whether my comparison with Yes was at all valid. "I think that since Rick Wakeman has joined, the band has become more keyboard orientated which is what we have been up to now. Also Wakeman has received classical training as has our keyboard player Tony Banks." The difference would seem to be that whereas Yes are becoming more complex by the album, Genesis are attempting to simplify and may even attempt something more acoustic for the follow-up to *Foxtrot*.

One of the most impressive things about the album is its unity. It's one of those albums that you listen to as a whole each time, even though it was written with individual tracks in mind. One of the reasons behind this is the fact that the tracks are very close together on the first side and the second side is taken up with an extended number featuring seven parts. "The reason the tracks are so close together on side one is that the playing time was the longest the disc cutter had ever had to do. With our sort of music you need to get a deep cut to get a good level and this of course takes up a lot of space. The cutting is very important to the way a record sounds. You lose a little every time you reproduce from one medium to another. In some cases, this is through five stages – from sixteen-track to eight-track down to stereo and then two-track. From there you have the cutting and eventually the pressing."

Supper's Ready possibly marks the high point of Genesis' career so far. Its achievement is in that although it's a long track lasting almost the whole of side two it manages to retain the interest of the listener throughout. This is done partly through the skilled use of recurring themes – many of which aren't obvious at first listening but nevertheless provide landmarks ensuring that no-one feels lost. "I think we've always worked towards the large pieces containing various moods," said Rutherford. "We've had a lot of practice at it. We try for recurring themes and yet at the same time maintaining the continuity."

Gabriel's lyrics match the music. For *Supper's Ready* he used the technique of 'stream of consciousness' writing where thoughts are allowed to tumble out of the mind each one stimulated by the previous thought and yet not necessarily related in the way we normally choose to think of things.

"Feel your body melt/Mum to mud to dad/dad diddley office. Dad diddley office/You're all full of ball/Dad to dam to dum to mum/mum diddley washing/mum diddley washing/you're all full of ball."

Using this method he writes down whatever comes and then investigates the subjects that are dragged out of the depths of his mind in this way.

During the writing of *Supper's Ready* he noticed that references to biblical prophecy were coming out and so he made further studies by reading the *Book of Revelation*. The results of this are evident in *Apocalypse In 9/8 (Co-Starring the Delicious Talents of Gabble Ratchet)'*.

As yet Genesis haven't performed *Supper's Ready* onstage. When they do they want the live performance to match up to the moods of the music. "The music to all of us suggests a collection of moods," said Mike Rutherford. "What we would now like to achieve is to carry on those moods in a visual way."

As can be seen from the above piece *Beat Instrumental* magazine had been won over to the Genesis camp, but the band was 'international' only in the sense that its influence reached beyond the UK and into a slowly growing number of European countries. Genesis' contemporaries such as Emerson, Lake and Palmer (ELP), Yes, Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple, Jethro Tull and Black Sabbath had all become huge in America and the seventies were indeed to see another British invasion the like of which we have not seen again. By late 1972 the band had yet to cross the Atlantic but Buddah (their American label) were convinced that Genesis could easily takes its place among the British rock aristocracy and were prepared to back up its hunch with hard cash.

With that in mind Buddah and Charisma organised Genesis' first US shows and ensured that ample publicity was generated on both sides of the Atlantic. With an eye to the UK press Charisma records arranged for the band to be accompanied by a writer from the influential *Sounds* magazine. The resulting piece published in *Sounds* on 23 December 1972 was called 'Now Time for US' and produced an evocative chronicle of that first visit which unfortunately managed to blend both triumph and disaster:

'"OK. Let's see your papers" barked the customs official at Kennedy International Airport. "But we are the papers," someone bounced back in diplomatically dulcet tones; whereupon we became integrated in the largest promotional campaign ever launched by Buddah and Charisma Records. Genesis were up for sale in the biggest make-or-break attempt since Brinsley Schwarz played the Fillmore East three years ago.

Top New York FM station WNEW had linked up with Buddah to promote a single show at New York's three thousand capacity Philharmonic Hall on 45th and Broadway, and all the leading American writers had homed in on the gig from Philadelphia, Boston, Detroit, and of course Los Angeles. Acquaintances were struck up, reunions brought about and impressions exchanged during the heady atmosphere of anticipation at Buddah before the gig. And all because of one New York radio station. In particular DJ Scott Muni had been flooding the air with the new British wonder product. The seductive voice of Alison Steele had rammed Genesis down the throats of all WNEW listeners. Pete Gabriel tuned in apprehensively and then broke into a grin: "My life has changed since I started using Genesis" he mimicked, and by this time the whole event had become slightly surreal.

A double deck London Transport omnibus drew up outside the Americane Hotel on 7th and 53rd to take us to the gig and America's writers finally extricated themselves from their discourses on the ars nova of the English rock culture that Genesis represented and awoke

to their new unprecedented environment. A double deck bus, wow, man, far out man. "Hey man if they have an accident down there do we have the same accident up here? Wow man far out. Hey man I've never seen Manhattan from this height before." Try and picture the situation in which Genesis had suddenly become fixed. The politics of experience humming about their ears like a bad dream; no-one wanted to be disappointed, no-one was there for the slaughter but it was evident that no American critic would shed any tears if the gig went sour.

The interpreters and analysts have been stretched beyond the demarcation lines by English charlatans, it appears, and whatever they were going to make of the Genesis gig, views were pretty certain to be dogmatic and polarised. Yet the shrewd mechanics behind the operation require some qualification for the initial manoeuvres contributed in no small measure to the ultimate success. WNEW hold an annual Christmas concert in aid of the Cerebral Palsy Fund. It's a goodwill concert. Profits to charity. An exchange of gifts and a general exhibition of charity which, like everything else in New York, is tastelessly ostentatious. Scott Muni is one of the big shots at WNEW and an Anglophile who picked up on Genesis as soon as Buddah had started the ball rolling. Soon he was playing tracks like *Watcher of the Skies*, which may be edited down for a single release, and *Supper's Ready*, and as the campaign gained momentum so interest picked up in Philadelphia, Phoenix and, more important in Cleveland, Ohio, which has suddenly become the place where trends begin.

String Driven Thing, the new Charisma band booked to support Genesis had also been given good air play on album tracks like *Circus*, and *My Real Hero*, and there was every chance that they would create a similar impact. But as the hour of hours approached, the acute sense of anticipation changed to one of mild foreboding. Proceedings were thirty minutes late kicking off and the capacity audience were subjected to all kinds of platitudinous preamble as DJs

were introduced and they in turn did their PR thing for the Cerebral Palsy Fund.

String Driven Thing had their hassles and little equipment problems but by the time they wrapped up their set with the traditional flavoured *Jack Diamond* they'd earned their champagne and had justified a 3,000 mile journey for a mere forty-five minutes.

Genesis' preparatory work had been slow and meticulous. Allowing no room for last minute slip-ups or so they thought. Richard McPhail and his road crew had crossed the Atlantic a week in advance to check out the hall, arrange the special effects and figure out an eleventh hour "rehearsal" gig before a handful of kids in Boston the night before. It was then that their worst fears were confirmed. The voltage changes onto the American circuit had left problems with Tony Banks' organ and musically the Boston gig just didn't get off the ground. There were all kinds of sound problems although Richard was confident that an early start at the Philharmonic Hall would enable a satisfactory sound check well ahead of schedule.

At least that's what would have happened had the Philharmonic Hall been available to the group on the afternoon of the gig. "But we couldn't take over the hall until four o'clock," Peter Gabriel explained afterwards "We didn't want to do it with only four hours' setting up time. In the end we didn't get the sound check done at all because the Philharmonic Orchestra were using the hall and it was the first time in two years that we haven't done a sound check before the show. On top of that we were using strange equipment and the whole thing had become quite absurd."

And that wasn't all, for Peter had become a victim of the Gorham Hotel's less than adequate ventilation and had woken in a stifled room with signs of catarrh. Watching the group take the stage, Tony Stratton-Smith must have felt like the manager of an injury-dogged football team making their first sortie into Europe. The MC gave a nice introduction, reminding the audience of Keith Emerson's

'I'd like to think of myself more as a writer than a performer. That's what I derive more satisfaction from.'

– Peter Gabriel

recommendations and Genesis stormed straight into one of the best versions of *Watcher of the Skies* I have heard.

From there the impact intensified and when Peter Gabriel appeared through the darkness during the late stages of *The Musical Box* and the lights suddenly greeted the strange apparition of the fox's head and long red dress, the audience reacted volubly. In retrospect the Gabriel mannerisms which we in England now take for granted, probably won the evening for Genesis in New York: I doubt whether the audience would have tolerated the ensuing hassles but for the shimmering mysticism which Gabriel constantly represented. He handled the situation beautifully, almost punctiliously, whilst being forced to concede that the band were only playing "at around seventy percent". As one critic pointed out afterwards, the slightest evidence of glitter and razzle dazzle would have blown it completely.

As usual Gabriel prefaced his songs with fantastic stories, but it was after *Fountains of Salmacis* that the problems began. Mike Rutherford tried desperately to cure an intermittent buzz from his bass, and as the breakdown at the end of each number grew longer and more embarrassing so the onus fell heavily on Peter Gabriel and drummer Phil Collins. "It was after that third number that I began to lose control of the situation because we were having all the hassles with the equipment," Pete recalled. "If we could have had all the facilities and the time to get things right then this would have been the way I'd like to have tackled America." he decided. Meanwhile, the concert had continued to balance on a fine edge as Genesis approached *Supper's Ready*. Gabriel again came up with the perfect gesture when, during one of the all too frequent interludes, he produced a camera, strode to the front of the stage, focused on the audience and shot. Flash gun and all. It evoked the sort of response that must have brought a deep sigh of relief from Tony Stratton-Smith. "I've never been so nervous before a gig since I've been in the business," he declared. The only comparable occasion was the Nice's first gig at the Fillmore East. "But what impressed me was that

in spite of the technical hang ups they got a one hundred percent reaction," he added.

"I felt that if one was ever to take a gamble and it was an enormous gamble then it should be done with a group that (a) had a really fine show and (b) a group that was coming to the top of the curve in terms of confidence and I think they were just at the right point in time to do this sort of thing. It was a tremendous challenge for the band." In a sense the band were a little too ambitious in tackling the epic composition *Supper's Ready*, and sure enough just when it mattered most Peter Gabriel's voice failed him, disappearing at worst into a hoarse and inaudible whisper. "It demanded a lot of sensitive singing that I wasn't able to provide," Pete reflected, but the combined skills of Steve Hackett, gliding and whining staccato style across his new Les Paul, and Tony Banks strung out, detached and insignificant on the right flank to keep the number building towards something like its usual climatic ending; audience response, however, was fairly indifferent although the sporadic cry for some rock and roll which had shattered the silence earlier in the evening was not repeated.

Return of the Giant Hogweed brought back memories of early Family and it was a good number with which to close the show. Gabriel seemed to find a second wind and the show closed as powerfully as it had started with those that could move surging to the front, those that couldn't move significantly into the aisles.

The final ovation was tremendous by any standards. The reaction was genuine – the crowd wanted more – and that's an extremely rare sight for a little-known British band making their debut in New York. And so Genesis came back to do *The Knife*, after which the house lights were quickly up. The band retired and the uninitiated might justifiably have thought it would be to celebrate their success. Instead they locked themselves away in the dressing room and would speak to no one. They were mentally exhausted, psychologically brought down because they'd played a million gigs better than that

one. It was scant consolation that however well they'd played they could scarcely have created more impact. Mike Rutherford, the man whom the Gods had treated particularly harshly, appeared at the backstage door and was greeted with a bitter sweet mixture of congratulations and condolences.

It is on such occasions that aftermath parties become slightly embarrassing and it was conspicuous that the guests were well into their cocktails before Genesis had regained sufficient equilibrium to make it along to the Tavern on the Green on Central Park's west side. It seemed rather predictable that as the party swung into the morning Genesis began to straighten out a little. There was still no sign of Peter Gabriel. He showed up eventually, but it was obvious that the gig had taken its toll and like Richard McPhail, his voice was suffering.

Next day the Buddah office was buzzing with genuine excitement from the feedback that was starting to filter through and excitement as a result of what they had seen with their own eyes. Executives kept wandering past muttering superlatives at no-one in particular. Neil Bogart was "overwhelmed" everybody kept saying, and when the man himself fluttered by, sure enough, he was indeed overwhelmed. Sha Na Na's manager kept appearing from nowhere and accosted all and sundry with a battery of beautiful lines. He eventually caught up with Peter Gabriel in one of the executive rooms where we congregated to hear a WNEW radio playback on the group. A rotund, jocular man, he duly approached Peter: "Y'know, your representative explained the group to me in such a way that I knew our relationship would be one of class warfare..."

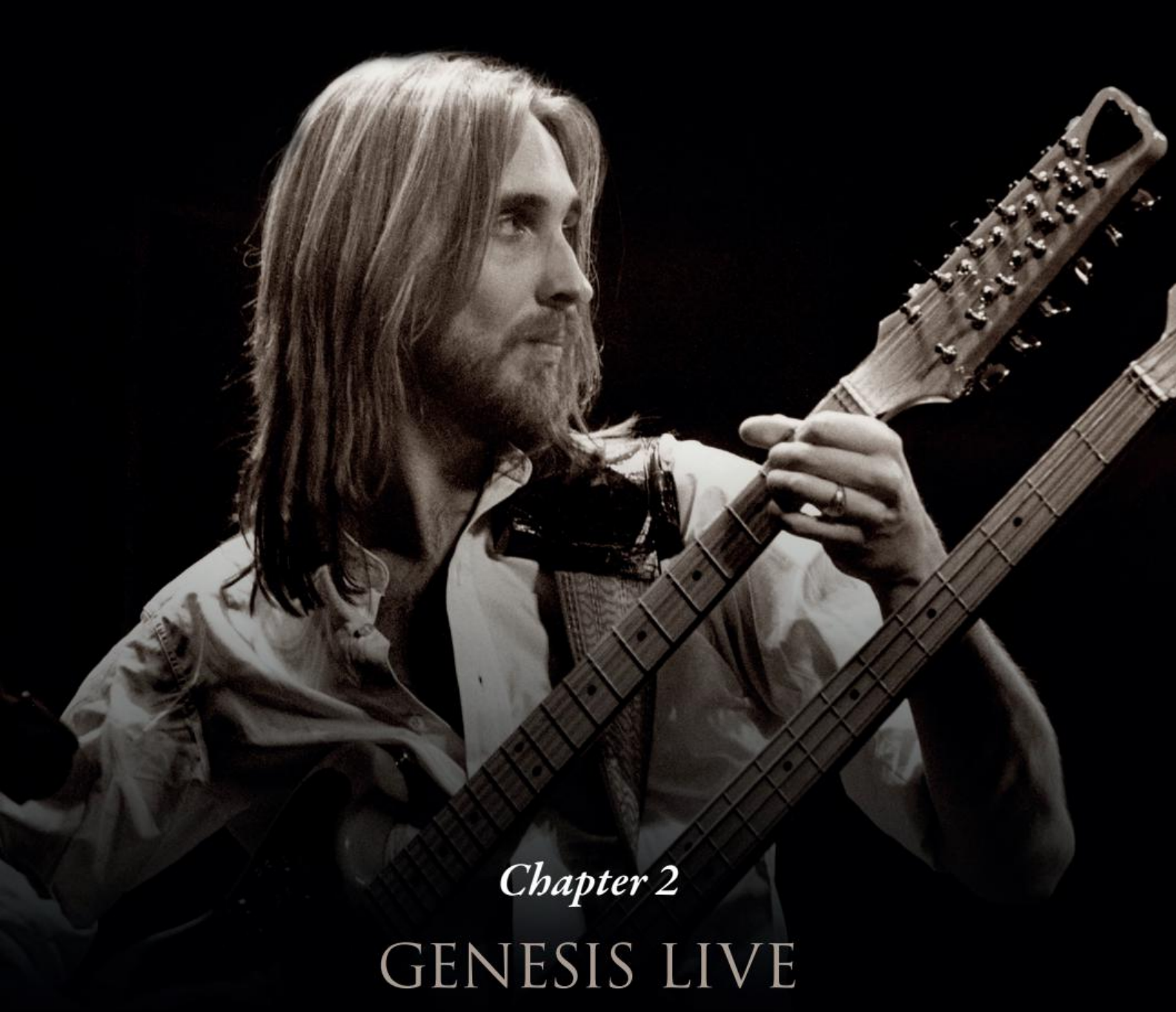
The place broke up, the tension eased. Gabriel and Rutherford were in good spirits, Tony Banks and Steve Hackett were typically taciturn and Phil Collins continued to grin and jest just as he had been doing since the band arrived in the States. He was getting off on the entire junket and intermittent punctuations were purely incidental as far as he was concerned. And so Thursday night the party made its way out

to Kennedy Airport for a short stop over at London before flying out to Hamburg for what could only be an anticlimax, "a routine gig".

Peter Gabriel emerged from the 747 frantically pulling his hair across the shaved area of his head which two nights before had been glistening with white paint. Suddenly he was faced with the reality of customs officials and his one aim was to make himself look presentable and ease his plight. At the customs desk, Peter Gabriel turned, proffered a hand and inquired in his humble manner whether there was anything else I wanted to know, and disappeared. The gathering disseminated and the operation which had cost Buddah and Charisma a total of $16,000 to promote, was now a memory. Sixteen grand for one operation, small price to pay for an ephemeral onslaught which will be ringing around the United States for a long time yet.

For the past two years Genesis have slowly but surely carved out their own little niche in the world of pop. To watch a Genesis gig is like a new experience; they have all the ingredients, colour, panache and pantomime, set to an orchestral background. They have been compared to bands like ELP and Yes, and *Foxtrot*, their latest album, justifies this great claim. Peter Gabriel's stage act has been described as more fearsome than Alice Cooper and more camp than David Bowie and he certainly captures the imagination of the audience, especially with his partly shaven head, made-up eyes and painted face... And while Mr. Gabriel's doing his thing the guitarists Steve Hackett and Mike Rutherford sit down sedately on the side of the stage almost as if they're waiting for their cue to go on. And then there's Tony Banks creating waves of sound on Mellatron and organ and finally there's Phil Collins, the artful dodger, showing why he commands so much respect from his fellow musicians.

Genesis means the beginning and this surely is the start of a fruitful career for this brilliant outfit."



Chapter 2

GENESIS LIVE

By the summer of 1973 Genesis had moved on to thoughts of the new album which would become *Selling England by the Pound*. However, much of the music press in the US had yet to catch up with the band's previous work and it was evident that a slight pause in the relentless schedule of touring and recording would do the band no harm at all. The group was beginning to show signs of burnout and a much needed rest was called for – but long rest periods are the last things on the agenda for fast rising rock bands. In order to keep up the momentum a compromise was agreed under which a live album culled from the band's *Foxtrot* era live shows would be released. This was

an understandable and shrewd compromise as Genesis were at something of a peak of creativity and the live album format was coming into its own. In the heavy rock world Deep Purple had blazed the trail with the mighty *Made in Japan*, Wishbone Ash had unleashed a minor masterpiece with *Live Dates* and Uriah Heep cemented their rising status with the immortal *Uriah Heep Live*. The progressive world saw the release of *Yessongs*, a lavishly packaged triple album. Not to be outdone ELP had begun work on their own, even more lavishly packaged triple live set which would ultimately saw the light of day as *Welcome Back My Friends*.

All of these albums along with many other live recordings from that era have gone on to become classics in their own right, but *Genesis Live* has never been accorded status as one of the great live albums. It should have been one of the crowning glories of the band's early career – but it wasn't. The obvious answer lies in the fact that *Genesis Live* was released as a mere single album which fell a long way short of capturing the variety and atmosphere of a Genesis show. Peter Gabriel had long captured the imagination of Genesis crowds with his surreal stories and interludes, all of which was lost by the constraints of trying to cram everything on to a single side of vinyl. It was a ridiculous idea to try and boil the Genesis experience down to thirty-eight minutes of vinyl but that's exactly what happened and the first casualty was, of course, *Supper's Ready* – the band's most popular live number!

So while Purple, Yes and ELP were all able to produce career defining moments which accurately captured the essence of each group's live stage set, it was glaringly obvious that four sides of vinyl was the absolute minimum to do justice to the exercise. Anything less was simply an edited highlights package which lost the true atmosphere of the live experience.

With interest in Genesis at an all time high the publicity machine had to be kept fed but with the band off the road there was little

in the way of new stories to keep things rolling forward. Barbara Charone helped to fill the gap by contributing a major piece for *NME*, entitled 'No Exodus Yet for Genesis' which was published on 25 August 1973. The release of *Genesis Live* had done little to further the band's career and the short gap in the publicity trail had led to conjecture over the future of the group. In conversation with the band Barbara immediately raised the subject of the hiatus which had fallen over the band's output of new material with Tony Banks:

'"Obviously we're out of the public's attention – but we come back that much stronger; some bands seem afraid to take time off; they feel they have to capitalise on their popularity." Confident words from Tony Banks – the Genesis key board wizard – taking time off from a rehearsal session this week to answer questions like just what have the band been up to since... when was it? "What we've been doing is running through many different musical ideas. That's what takes up most of our time. The rest of the time is spent putting everything together, making it flow. We try to file all these little musical ideas into a giant catalogue in our heads. And quite often we'll find room for old passages – after all, joining on any two sequences is possible."

"Someone might come up with a really beautiful bit," lead guitarist Steve Hackett added, "but the problem is where to put it. Getting an album together is like working on a giant jig-saw puzzle, fitting all the various pieces." Being closely involved with a long-term project makes Genesis wonder – wonder if the album is good, wonder about acceptance, and repetition. "Every album is critical. We still don't really make any money," Banks admits. "And our sponsors can't go on forever putting money into us without returns. *Nursery Cryme* was one of our biggest disappointments. We had taken three months off to make the album as it was our first with the new line-up. The negative reaction the album received made *Foxtrot* critical. Two badly received albums in a row would have been disastrous."

"We've had producer trouble all along. Everyone in the group has very definite ideas about how he wants his bit to sound. We've had some weird scenes with producers, things like guitar solos without guitars," Tony laughs. "Obviously conflicts and limitations with group writing exist. However, working within the framework of a group, produces better music than simply one individual. Musicians without criticism seem to get so terribly self-indulgent.

"Because of that very thing," bassist Michael Rutherford continues, "there's more pain and anguish with us. One day it's absolutely amazing, while the next day you're a ruined and dejected man." Never a band to satiate the market with product, *Genesis Live* appeared amidst a lull in activity. "When you're working on new material it's quite difficult getting excited about old material. Our best number, *Supper's Ready*, isn't on the live album as we couldn't very well release two albums with identical sides." Some tracks on the album are better than the studio recordings especially *Return of the Giant Hogweed* and *Musical Box*. Aside from occasional flaws in the playing, the sound is quite good," Hackett continues. "Our last tour was our first attempt at combining visuals with the stage show. The white backdrop worked well on that tour. Presently, we're toying with the idea of using extensive backdrop projection in the new act," Hackett reveals. "Ideally we'd like the visuals and the music to compliment each other. You can't always think in terms of musical visual pictures. Naturally we'd never dismiss a piece of music if we thought it inadequate for visual presentation." Banks stresses. "Visuals added a new dimension to numbers we had been playing for a year. It was like playing the pieces for the first time," says Hackett. "Unquestionably visuals affect the music," Banks continues, "but they should always serve as a plus, never a minus."

Last March Genesis set out on their first major American tour, working the country like they worked Britain in the early days, carrying their own lights and backdrops. "Attitudes of American audiences were a bit like – 'well come on show us what you can do'.

Genesis Live **is formed from the recordings of shows at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester and the De Montfort Hall in Leicester in February 1973 during the band's tour supporting** ***Foxtrot*****.**

It's like they've seen it all. One night someone screamed out – 'you better be fucking good', – which doesn't exactly make one play better. What saved us in the end," Hackett admits, "was the visuals". "It's quite a problem when you come face to face with an audience that doesn't like you," Banks continues "a crowd that wants you to play loud and play rock. In those situations, it's easy to get the feeling that you're trying to educate the people which is obviously all wrong."

"I can now understand why so many English bands break up after American tours. You're in England, secure and doing well then once in the States it feels like you're getting nowhere. That situation can be quite a bring-down, smashed egos and all.

"But our American tour wasn't particularly straining. We didn't do that many concerts in a row because Peter's voice tends to go after two or three nights, which was good for the band anyway. So many bands seem to kill themselves. The dream of a hit single plagues the band. They admit to not having a clue as to what makes a single a hit yet one might exist on the new album. Could you imagine a three-minute version of *Supper's Ready*?

"What we'd like to do is record something simple yet which still represents Genesis without being too complicated. Of course, that sort of record is quite rare."

"There's certain chord changes and rhythms that seem taboo in singles, chords that we seem to favour. If we honestly knew what made a good single, we'd do it," says Tony a bit bewildered. "Being off the road is a nice change," Rutherford admits. "Change makes one appreciate something so much more. Of course, by the end of the summer I'll be looking forward to puttering around on stage."
As I left, the band began to rehearse, enraptured with new equipment. Michael Rutherford sported a bass guitar connected by plastic tape to a six string electric. Tony Banks, fascinated with his new Mellotron and synthesizer, raved on about new sounds. And in the corner Steve Hackett sat playing with his newest toy – an

echoplex that repeats an infinite number of guitar runs. The future for Genesis could indeed be cosmic."

In May 1973, Ron Ross at *Phonograph Record* was tasked with reviewing the band's second concert at the Philharmonic Hall in New York. Fortunately on this second visit to the venue where they had suffered so many problems the previous December, Genesis were free from the technical gremlins which had made their first visit such a misery. Ron's piece could well serve as a perfect pen portrait of the concerts which spawned the live album and provides a tantalising glimpse of what could have been had Charisma had the courage of their convictions and gone for a complete double album including story telling, *Supper's Ready* and the other gems from Genesis' work in the live arena:

'In a musical world dominated by duelling banjos, pop boys, wimpoid artists and Soul Train, is there a place for a British group that writes epics on such trivial matters as death, money, government, sex, freedom, nature, war, and power; whose lead singer has a half dozen different voices resembling Roger Daltrey, David Bowie, Roger Chapman, and John Lennon by turns; and who have nothing whatever to do with Slade, Mott the Hoople or T. Rex? Genesis are answering that rather long question with a resoundingly succinct "You betcha", as their second American tour demonstrates a newly improved control over their incomparable theatricality and a paring down of their act to six quite literally fantastic excursions into a Lewis Carroll, sci-fi "half-world" revealed through Peter Gabriel's multiplicity as singer, mimic narrator and flautist. Peter also plays bass drum and has a rather prominent streak of baldness along his centre-parting.

Genesis as musicians are more flash than Flash when the occasion calls for it, though Peter is generally the only member who performs while standing. They have as fine a dynamic sense as Yes, without

lapsing into the musical abstractions that often make Yes sound like so much trebly high-energy. Genesis write collectively and their songs have the magic, variety, and drive of pop reference points like Rael or the second side of Abbey Road. As a total concept, their sense of light and shade, characterization, melodrama, humour and gesture, combine to make them the most important self-admittedly theatrical group since the Who. And this pop writer don't kid when he mentions da Who.

When the lights went up in New York's Philharmonic Hall on foot after foot of sheer white drapery behind and around the stage, Gabriel's made-up eyes radiated day-glo like eerie white doughnuts in his temporarily expressionless face as he stood perfectly still while Tony Banks played the organ introduction of *Watcher of the Skies*, transforming the hall into a very dusty, malevolent, and yet bizarrely sacred ancient church. Without emphasizing the electronics, Genesis are completely in control of a multitude of sounds, and Banks gives this introduction the feeling of a silent movie produced by some distant and awesomely powerful but technologically backward civilization. The music is what we Higher Critics call "evocative."

Banks has also found a way to use the Mellotron without calling undue attention to that most moody abused instrument. He can play it off against the pulse and sound of the rest of the band, creating the atmosphere of clouds shifting over an angry sea. Bassist Michael Rutherford and drummer Phil Collins subtly effect the flow and intensity of the songs, while Peter, Bowie-like, sings around, behind, and over the music. Rutherford also doubles on acoustic guitar, since Genesis are above all a band of textures, and Collins lends vocal support so unobtrusively that Gabriel often sounds double-tracked. Steve Hackett, along with Steve Howe, is helping to define what the electric guitar will sound like in the seventies, no longer an overbearingly phallic solo instrument, but one more versatile and piercing voice in the arrangement. So careful is Hackett to give the

impression of a craftsman rather than a pop star, that his standing on one number seemed a concession.

The Musical Box and *Get 'Em Out by Friday* are two of Genesis' better known story-songs, both reflecting a feeling for that peculiarly British ironic sensibility that the Kinks were once so representative of. *Musical Box* is quite extraordinarily a Victorian fantasy of murder and rape which Peter used to introduce with one of his crazed but straight-faced monologues with mime, as reproduced with the lyrics in *Nursery Cryme*. Without manipulating the instrument in the ridiculously overstated manner of Ian Anderson, Gabriel is an excellent flautist, lending the arrangement a lyrical yet threatening transparency, like gas seeping noiselessly under a door. The rape sequence, with its carefully underplayed quiet desperation, is more suspenseful and yet fully as unnerving as any of the more gory violations Alice used to practice on his dolls in the Killer show.

Get 'Em Out by Friday has Gabriel switching from the nastily Cockney winkler to the evicted and hopeless Mrs. Barrow with a simple hat trick. Though Peter uses more props and costumes in the act than Bowie even, his effects are always used to lend impact to the song itself. Rather than make a dramatic exit and re-entrance, Peter merely crouches behind his bass drum and comes up another character. Because songs like *Get 'Em Out* so completely blend mime, costuming, music and lyrics into a perfectly reasonable synthesis, Genesis come closer to a real form of rock opera than anything yet. Opera is the sum of all the performing arts into a whole greater than its parts, which is exactly the way Genesis work collectively. It is not that *Musical Box* sounds any more like opera than the original Tommy but that Genesis' aesthetic synthesis is indistinguishable from their act rather than imposed on it to make it seem more important.

Peter's most spectacular innovation is his self-designed headdresses which he wears over variously fabricated jumpsuits and gowns during *Supper's Ready*, an extended work about romantic love, the evils of

science, the apocalypse, and ultimate salvation. If this all seems a bit pretentious (it is, in fact, very pretentious), there is nevertheless no way Peter's yellow-orange, three-foot wide flower head-dress through which his face peeps through as he sings *Willow Farm* could not crack up an audience after they have done with gasping from disbelief. It is impossible to get an audience to live at least for a time through your music without being somewhat pretentious; B.B. King's endlessly permutated macho ravings or the Raspberries' attempts to resurrect Beatlemania are equally contrived as efforts to create strong feelings where none might have existed before the performance. The bottom line, however, is that Peter Gabriel looks roughly ten times better in a jumpsuit than Mick Jagger and doesn't have to foam at the mouth to impress his audiences.

If they never have a hit single, and it's unlikely that they even listen to hit singles, Genesis could be a tremendous commercial success for many of the same reasons as Bowie, Alice Cooper, the Moody Blues, Yes or Jethro Tull. They make the most of that transcendent Britishness that has kept us with the Move and the Kinks for so many years and now that pop is having its brightest day since 1965, it's good to see a band that appreciates 1967 and the kind of intelligence which once made the Airplane great, without having to create an asshole like Aqualung to prove it. And then there's the one they do about the hermaphrodite fountain...'

By this time Genesis were seen as rapidly rising stars of the UK music scene and not surprisingly a great deal of interest centred on the flamboyant front man who was fast becoming regarded as a rock icon to match Bowie or Bolan.

This was an interest that eventually divided the band, yet in 1973 they were riding high on the wave of popularity. Invigorated, Genesis went back into the studio to begin work on their fifth studio album, the excellent *Selling England by the Pound*.

Continue the Genesis journey and read the behind the scenes story of of this classic album in the next issue of Music Legends Special Editions – Genesis, Selling England by the Pound.

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